





LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

॥

THE INFLUENCE
OF
THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH
ON
THE PROGRESS OF LIBERTY AND
LIBERAL LEGISLATION.

A Lecture

BY
HENRY RICHARD, M.P.

DELIVERED IN THE FREE TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER,
February 4th, 1873,

Under the auspices of the Manchester Nonconformist Association.

MANCHESTER :
NONCONFORMIST ASSOCIATION, 6, BROWN STREET.

LONDON :
HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1873.



THE
INFLUENCE OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH
ON THE PROGRESS OF LIBERTY AND
LIBERAL LEGISLATION.

IT is a curious indication of the state of public opinion in this country, that only eighty years ago Robert Hall should have thought it necessary to publish a work to prove that "Christianity is consistent with a love of freedom." To me, with the New Testament in my hand, no demonstration can seem more superfluous than that. But then, unhappily, Christianity has for many centuries been principally seen by the great majority of mankind, not as it appears in the New Testament, but as it appears in alliance with human governments, and those generally of the most despotic and oppressive character; and it is a deplorable fact, that the history of the past hardly supplies the records of more degrading and abject thralldom, of more pitiless and sanguinary cruelties than those which princes have inflicted on the world, when the banner of the cross was ostentatiously flaunting over hosts, and the priests of Christianity were sitting in the high places of honour around their thrones. Yes; so it was. The followers of the meek and lowly consented to be the chosen councillors of tyrants; they who announced themselves as the ministers of God's mercy to the world, and who ought, by virtue of the office they sustained, to have smitten with indignant rebuke the cruelties of the oppressor, themselves became panders to the ambition of kings, and, with their own hands, bound the free spirit of man to the car of royal or imperial despotism. It is not Christianity, but established Christianity, that has done this evil; and though there has probably been less of this in our own country than in most others, yet I am afraid that in discussing

the question before us, in examining the influence which the Established Church of England has exercised on the progress of liberty and liberal legislation for the last three centuries, it will appear that Mr. Hall was not doing a work of supererogation, in proving to his countrymen that Christianity is consistent with a love of freedom. I wish to premise one remark. I am going to exhibit to you only one aspect of the Church of England, and not its best aspect. The fact is that it has two histories—one as a Christian Church, and the other as an Established Church. The former is in many respects a great and honourable history. In that capacity it has its noble army of martyrs ; its long and illustrious line of able, learned, and eloquent writers, who have contributed largely to vindicate the truth, to illustrate the excellence and to enforce the duties of Christianity ; its hundreds and thousands of pious, zealous, and devoted clergy who have made full proof of their ministry among all classes of the community from the highest to the lowest ; its tens of thousands of men and women, trained under its influence, who by their saintly lives and pure devotion to the highest service of humanity have embodied the gospel in their own character and example ; its large apparatus of voluntary institutions, religious, charitable, and educational, spread over the face of the country. These are things of which any church may be proud. But its history as an Established Church is neither noble nor honourable. In that capacity I fear it must be maintained, that in nearly all the efforts made by the people of this country, since the Protestant Reformation, to give a fuller and freer development to the national life, the Church of England in its official character has been uniformly and violently against them.

Let us first look at the question of religious liberty, which is the foundation of all liberty. It is sometimes said by our Church friends that theirs is the most tolerant Church in the world. It may be so. I will not enter into any comparison of its character in this respect with other Churches. But granting the assumption to be correct, the inevitable inference to be drawn from it is this—that no Church whatever can be trusted to use the secular power for its own purposes. For if this is the best of ecclesiastical Establishments, the best is so bad that no nation careful of its liberties ought to tolerate an Establishment at all. For what

does history tell us as to the conduct of this most tolerant of Churches, in times that are past? I cannot go into all the evidence on this point. Suffice it, in a few sentences, to summarise what can be substantiated at large by any amount of proof.

What did it do in the reign of Queen Elizabeth? I will answer in the words of a clergyman: "Archbishop Whitgift
 "endeavoured with indomitable courage and by innumerable acts
 "of oppression to carry out the vain design of binding the free
 "spirit of the English nation to a rigid uniformity of public
 "worship. Armed with the tremendous power of the High Com-
 "mission Court, he harassed the Puritanical clergy; they were
 "fined and imprisoned, hundreds of them were suspended, and
 "many deprived of their livings; at one time, it was said a third
 "of the whole beneficed clergy were under suspension for refusing
 "to comply with the habits and ceremonies of the Church."*
 With the Dissenters, of course, it fared still worse; "they were im-
 "prisoned for months and years in the foulest gaols—fouler even
 "than those which John Howard, two centuries later, exposed to
 "the shame and indignation of the world—beaten with cudgels,
 "some left to die of fevers and sores, while others were committed
 "to the gallows. Barrowe, Greenwood, and Penry, the three great
 "witnesses for Independency, met the latter fate."†

What did it do in the reign of Charles I.? I will answer again in the language of a clergyman: "Meanwhile Laud was display-
 "ing his fierce, cruel character by a furious persecution of the
 "Puritans. Great numbers of them forsook their dear homes, their
 "friends, and comforts, and fled for refuge to the vast howling
 "wilderness of America, until Laud, in an evil hour for himself
 "and his royal master, procured an order to prohibit their migra-
 "tion. They were persecuted in the bishops' courts, fined, whipped,
 "pilloried, imprisoned; they suffered barbarous mutilations, ear
 "croppings, nose slittings, and brandings; they could enjoy no
 "rest, so that death was better than life itself."‡ "Nothing," says
 Milton, "but the wide ocean and the savage wilderness could
 "hide and shelter them from the fury of the bishops."

What did it do in the reign of Charles II.? It passed the Act of Uniformity, the Corporation Act, the Conventicle Act, the Five

* Mountfield's "Two Hundred Years Ago," p. 14.

† Skeats' "Free Churches," p. 27.

‡ Mountfield, p. 22.

Mile Act, and the Test Act, and by the operation of these Acts exposed the Nonconformists to hardships and sufferings the extent of which is very imperfectly apprehended even by their descendants. Fines, imprisonments, transportations were put in force against them relentlessly. It is believed that the pecuniary penalties inflicted upon them from the Restoration to the Revolution amounted to fourteen millions sterling. The prisons—and that at a time when the prisons of England were dens of torment and pestilence—were crowded with men and women guilty of no crime but that of worshipping God according to their consciences. Sixty thousand were imprisoned. There were four thousand Quakers alone in the different gaols of the kingdom at one time. From 5,000 to 8,000, as they are variously estimated by different writers, are believed to have died in prison. Some were transported or sold as slaves into the colonies; others escaped from the sufferings that awaited them by becoming voluntary exiles in Holland or America.

What did it do in Scotland during the reign of the Stuart kings? "In Scotland," says Mr. Lecky, "a persecution as revolting in atrocity as almost any on record, was directed by the English Government, at the instigation of the Scotch Bishops and with the approbation of the English Church, against all who repudiated Episcopacy. If a conventicle was held in a house, the preacher was liable to be put to death. If it was held in open air, both minister and people incurred the same fate. The Presbyterians were hunted like criminals over the mountains. Their ears were torn from the roots. They were branded with hot irons. Their fingers were wrenched asunder by the thumbkins. The bones of their legs were shattered in their boots. Women were scourged publicly through the streets. Multitudes were transported to Barbadoes; infuriated soldiers were let loose upon them, and encouraged to exercise all their ingenuity in torturing them."*

What did it do in England in the reign of Queen Anne? It passed the Occasional Conformity Bill, which undid the few concessions in favour of Dissenters made by the Toleration Act, and branded them with the stigma of utter disability to serve the State in any office whatever. "The whole body of the clergy,"

* Lecky's "Rationalism in Europe," Vol. II., p. 41.



says Dean Swift, "were violent for this Bill." It passed the Schism Act, which, if it had come into operation—a calamity happily averted by the death of the Queen—would have absolutely crushed all the colleges and other educational institutions of the Nonconformists throughout the country, for this measure enacted that no person should keep any public or private school, or teach or instruct as tutor or schoolmaster, who had not subscribed a declaration to conform to the Established Church, and obtained from the bishop of the diocese in which he resided a license to teach. Even in the reign of George II. the saintly Dr. Doddridge, whose learning and moderation were acknowledged by men of all parties, was prosecuted, in the Ecclesiastical Court, by some dignitaries of the Church of England for teaching an academy. Nor was the prosecution stopped until the King personally interposed, and said,—“During my reign there shall be no persecution for conscience’ sake.”*

What has it done since? It has steadfastly and strenuously resisted all efforts made in the direction of religious liberty, whether for the Roman Catholics or the Jews or the Protestant Nonconformists.

What did it do in Ireland? I am not now speaking of what was done to the Roman Catholics, but to the Protestant Nonconformists. Mr. Froude’s recent volumes cast a singular light on this subject. It shows that while the Protestants were altogether in a small minority, and would have had work enough even if united and compact to hold their own, the bishops and authorities of the Episcopal Establishment lost no opportunity to harass and oppress all Protestants not of their own communion. In 1665 they passed a second Act of Uniformity, more despotic and merciless than the English Act, which drove multitudes from the country. “Then commenced,” says Mr. Froude, “that fatal ‘emigration of Nonconformist Protestants from Ireland to New England, which drained Ireland of its soundest Protestant blood.’” In 1692, “though the bishops and clergy of the Establishment ‘prayed for James till William entered Dublin, and though the ‘Ulster Calvinists had won immortal honour, and saved England ‘half the labour of re-conquest by their share in the defence of

* Orton’s *Life of Doddridge*, pp. 283-4.

“Derry,” yet the bishops and clergy resolutely and successfully opposed the passing of a Toleration Bill identical with the English Act, though it was earnestly pressed forward by the King, one of the bishops saying, with grim irony, that, “Episcopalians “were opposed to toleration that they might preserve power to “show tenderness to their Dissenting brethren.” In 1704 they passed a Bill which deprived Nonconformist marriages in Ireland of all legal validity. “The bishops,” says Mr. Froude, “fell upon “the grievance which had so long afflicted them of the Presbyterian “marriages. Catholic marriages did not trouble them, for Catholic “priests were carefully ordained, and could perform valid sacra- “ments. Dissenting ministers were unsanctified upstarts, whose “pretended ceremonial was a license for sin.”* It was announced that the children of all Protestants not married in a church should be treated as bastards; and as the record of this childish insanity declares:—“Many persons of undoubted reputation “were prosecuted in the bishops’ courts as fornicators, for cohabit- “ing with their own wives.”†

It may be said that the measures and acts I have described were measures and acts of the State. Undoubtedly of the State, but of the State controlled and stimulated by the Church. For it is a melancholy but unquestionable fact that whenever there has been any specially bitter outbreak of religious persecution in this country, it is connected with the name of some great ecclesiastic as its principal originator and fomentor. And surely it is an utterly sad spectacle to see the ministers of the religion of charity and brotherly love standing behind the thrones of despots to whisper poisonous words into their ears, in order to instigate them to acts of terror and torture against their fellow-Christians. Is it not so? Need I remind you of the names of Elizabeth and Whitgift, of James I. and Bancroft, of Charles I. and Laud, of Charles II. and Sheldon? In most of these cases the secular statesmen of the day were shocked and scandalised at the indecent violence of the Churchmen, and tried to restrain and moderate their fury. It is well known that Burleigh, Walsingham, and Bacon were disgusted with the intolerant and arbitrary proceedings of Whitgift. Lord

* Froude’s “The English in Ireland.” Vol. I., pp. 155, 238.

† Ibid, Vol. I., p. 319.

Burleigh wrote in strong remonstrance against certain articles of examination which the prelate had prepared as "so curiously penned, so full of branches and circumstances as he thought the inquisitors of Spain used not so many questions to comprehend and to trap their preys." "But the extensive jurisdiction," says Mr. Hallam, "improvidently granted to the ecclesiastical commissioners, and which the Queen was not at all likely to recall, placed Whitgift beyond the control of the temporal administration." Even Charles I. was obliged, in obedience to a strong expostulation from the nobility, to interfere personally to forbid some of Laud's measures of excessive severity. And it is said that Sheldon and the bishops made even Clarendon and Charles II. sometimes ashamed of their violence. Yes, the fact stands unhappily too well attested on all pages of history, that the priests of any religion, when they have been armed with the secular power, are ever the most merciless of persecutors.

Very remarkable is the testimony of Bishop Watson on this point. "Who was it," he says, "who crucified the Saviour of the world for attempting to reform the religion of his country? The Jewish priesthood. Who was it that drowned the altars of their idols with the blood of Christians for attempting to abolish paganism? The pagan priesthood. Who was it that persecuted to flames and death those who, in the time of Wickliffe and his followers, laboured to reform the errors of Popery? The Popish priesthood. Who was it, and who is it, that both in England and Ireland since the reformation"—but here the Bishop felt that he was treading on delicate ground, and he says, "but I check my hand, being unwilling to reflect upon the dead and to exasperate the living." "But," as Mr. Jonathan Dymond says, after quoting this passage, "we also are unwilling to reflect upon or exasperate, but our business is with plain truth. Who, then, was it that, since the Reformation, has persecuted dissentients from its creed, and who is it that at this hour thinks and speaks of them with unchristian antipathy? The English priesthood. It was, and it is, the State religion in some European countries that now persecutes Dissenters from its creed. It was the State religion in this country that persecuted the Protestants; and since Protestantism has been established it is the State religion

“that has persecuted Protestant Dissenters. Is this the fault principally of the faith of these churches, or of their alliance with the State? No man can be in doubt for an answer.”*

I am quite aware that there are thousands, tens of thousands, of the members of the English Church in our own day who bewail the folly and execrate the cruelty of the acts I have described as honestly and earnestly as we do ourselves. And it may be said, “Why revive those ancient grievances? The Church does not persecute now?” No, the Church does not persecute now—at least in such forms of persecution as those which have passed in review; first, because it has not the power, and also, I willingly add, because many of its sons have not the disposition. But surely it is a little unreasonable to expect that we should utterly ignore the past. How is it possible to understand the character of an institution without studying its history? and especially studying its history in those times and circumstances when its natural tendencies were at liberty to develop themselves without let or hindrance? And besides, my subject imperatively requires this retrospect, if I am to show the influence of the Established Church on the *progress* of liberty and of Liberal legislation.

But there was an episode in that part of the ecclesiastical history of England to which I have been referring, which is full of significance and instruction. The nation, driven to desperation by the wrongs and sufferings it had endured from an established Episcopacy, arose in its wrath and hurled it from its pride of place. The Anglican Church was discrowned and deposed, and Presbyterianism reigned in its stead. And what then happened? That which always happens with established churches. The Presbyterians began to persecute as vigorously as their predecessors. The country soon found, as Milton said in the indignant sonnet he wrote on the occasion, that

New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large,
and that the fresh comers into ecclesiastical supremacy were eager,
like those who went before them, to

Adjure the civil sword,
To force our consciences that Christ set free.

Our Church friends are wont, when we refer to persecutions which

* Dymond's Essays, p. 480.

our Puritan and Nonconformist ancestors endured from their Church, to retort the persecutions which their ancestors endured from the Presbyterians when they gained the ascendancy. They have a perfect right to do so. I am not careful to answer them in this matter. I abandon freely to their condemnation "the men of the solemn league and covenant." The more they denounce them the more they fortify my argument. Presbyterianism persecuted, they say. Yes, undoubtedly, I answer. But it was an established, not a free, Presbyterianism that persecuted then, as it was an established, not a free, Episcopalianism that persecuted before.

My principal object, however, in this lecture is to show the influence of the Established Church on civil liberty, and the progress of Liberal legislation in regard to our social and political rights. And lest I should be thought to be jaundiced by Dissenting prejudice in the view I am about to take on this question, let me first cite the deliberate judgment of two great writers of our age, both of them, I believe, members of the Episcopal Church—Lord Macaulay and Mr. Lecky. Lord Macaulay says: "The Church of England continued to be for more than a hundred and fifty years the servile handmaid of monarchy, the steady enemy of public liberty. The divine right of kings, and the duty of passively obeying all their commands, were her favourite tenets. She held those tenets firmly through times of oppression, persecution, and licentiousness; while law was trampled down; while judgment was perverted; while the people were eaten as though they were bread. Once, and but once, for a moment, and but for a moment, when her own dignity and property were touched, she forgot to practice the submission she had taught."* Mr. Lecky is no less emphatic: "Created in the first instance by a Court intrigue, pervaded in all its parts by a spirit of the most intense Erastianism, and aspiring at the same time to a spiritual authority scarcely less absolute than that of the Church which it had superseded, Anglicanism was from the beginning at once the most servile and the most efficient agent of tyranny. Endeavouring by the assistance of temporal authority and by the display of worldly pomp, to realise in England the same position as Catholicism had occupied in

* Macaulay's Essays, Vol. I. p. 132.

“Europe, she naturally flung herself on every occasion into the arms of the civil power. No other Church so uniformly betrayed and trampled on the liberties of her country. In all those fiery trials through which English liberty has passed since the Reformation, she invariably cast her influence into the scale of tyranny, supported and eulogised every attempt to violate the constitution, and wrote the fearful sentence of eternal condemnation upon the tombs of the martyrs of freedom.”*

This is a terrible indictment. But before proceeding to adduce some of the evidence by which it may be sustained, let me premise two remarks: First, that this description applies to the Church of England only as represented by the clergy, and those whom the clergy inspired and instigated. Among the lay members of that Church there have always been found some of the truest, noblest friends of freedom that the world has seen, and it is, indeed, to the steady and strenuous resistance of her own sons to the servile doctrines and persecuting practices of the Church that we owe to a large extent our present liberties.† My second remark is, that even the bishops and clergy of the Church of England ought not to be involved in indiscriminate condemnation. There have been generally a few among them of a different temper, men who have battled bravely, so far as their position would allow them, for religious toleration and civil liberty. The names of Burnet, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Tennison, Hoadly, and others, deserve in this connection to be held in honourable remembrance. But by the great majority of their brethren these men have always been denounced as enemies of the Church. The following is the description given by a clergyman of the treatment this class of

* Lecky's "History of Rationalism in Europe," Vol. ii. p. 178.

† But I have no doubt liberal Churchmen, of every age, would have been the first to acknowledge that their success in resisting measures of oppression, and promoting measures of liberty, was mainly owing to the support they received from the Puritans and Nonconformists. "So absolute was the authority of the Crown," says Hume, in reference to the time of the Stuarts, "that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans alone; and it was to this sect that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution." Mr. Lecky says:—"It is difficult, indeed, to overrate the debt of gratitude that England owes both to her Non-Episcopal Churches, and to those of Scotland. In good report and in evil, amid persecution and ingratitude, and horrible wrongs, in ages when all virtue seemed corroded, and when apostacy had ceased to be a stain, they clung fearlessly and faithfully to the banner of her freedom."

clergymen met with in the reign of Charles II.: "They were reviled as trimmers—no lovers of the Church—wolves in sheep's clothing—designing hypocrites, betrayers and underminers of the Church, men who smile in your face when about to cut your throat, men who handled the Church with the hands of Esau, but now speak with the voice of Jacob; men who trim and trick, play fast and loose; who, under their beloved moderation, in a creeping, whining, sanctified dialect aim at encouraging and supporting Dissenters, and, on behalf of their old Puritan friends pimp for bills of union, comprehension, or toleration; good had it been for the Church of England that they had never been born."* And I fear there is no doubt that *this* must be considered as the prevailing spirit which has animated her policy and guided her councils in all past times.

It was the signal misfortune of the Church of England as an Established Church that it was so constituted as to become from the first, as it was intended to become, the ally and instrument of despotism. Lord Macaulay says that Elizabeth supported the Church by severe penal laws, not because she thought conformity to its discipline necessary to salvation, but *because it was the fastness which arbitrary power was making strong for itself*. And, first of all, let us look at the *principles* as regards civil liberty which the Church of England has authoritatively and habitually taught. Her doctrines on this subject are thus summarised by Mr. Lecky: "That no tyranny, however gross, that no violation of the constitution, however flagrant, can justify resistance; that all those principles concerning the rights of nations on which constitutional government is based are false, and all those efforts of resistance by which constitutional government is achieved are deadly sins, was her emphatic and continued teaching."† The proof of this charge is, unhappily, only too abundant. The Homilies were first published in the year 1562. They were intended to be substitutes for sermons at a time when many of the clergy were not qualified to preach. They must be regarded, therefore, as the spiritual food which the Church provided for her children, as containing the views which she was anxious should become incorporated as it were with the blood and bones and

* Mountfield, p. 116.

† "Rationalism in Europe." Vol. II., p. 179.

sinews of Englishmen. Well, what is the teaching, on the subject before us, embodied in the Homilies? I can only cite two or three short sentences to indicate the spirit which permeates the whole. "A rebel is worse than the worst prince, and rebellion worse than the worst government of the worst prince hath hitherto been." "God placeth as well evil princes as good," and, therefore, "for subjects to deserve through their sins to have an evil prince and then to rebel against him were double and treble evil by provoking God more to plague them." In the beginning of the third part of the Homily against Disobedience the preacher says: "It remaineth that I do declare unto you what an abominable sin against God and man rebellion is, and how dreadfully the wrath of God is kindled and inflamed against rebels, and what horrible plagues, punishments, and deaths, and finally, eternal damnation, hangeth over their heads, and how, on the contrary part, good and obedient subjects are in God's favour, and be partakers of peace, quietness, and security, with other God's manifold blessings in this world, and by His mercies through Our Saviour Jesus Christ, of life everlasting also in the world to come."* Here it will be observed that absolute submission to the will of every ruler, however tyrannical, is inculcated, that every species of resistance is disallowed, even that passive resistance—in my opinion the best and most effectual—of which there are so many conspicuous examples in the lives of the apostles and primitive Christians. The same doctrines were solemnly embodied in the canons of Convocation in 1606. And in the writings and sermons of the clergy they appear in forms, if possible, still more marked and offensive. Archbishop Parker, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, said: "The magistrate is empowered to govern the consciences of his subjects. Private persons have no right to judge; they are not masters of their own actions, nor ought they to be governed by their own judgments; but they ought to be directed by the public conscience of their governors."† Dr. Sibthorp, in the reign of James I., says: "The King hath his duty to direct and make laws. He doth whatever pleases him. Where the word of the King is there is power, and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" Dr. Wren, in the reign of Charles II.,

* Homilies, p. 485.

† Church Polity, sect. I., p. 17.

says: "If any man say I fear God and feareth not the King, he is
 "a liar; and, Lord, what a holy army of liars might we then
 "quickly muster up! . . . There is not the least contempt
 "of majesty but is a spice of profanation, and every step of dis-
 "loyalty is a high degree of atheism. . . . Unless you will
 "be slaves and rebels you will fear God and the King alike." Dr.
 Mainwaring, in the same reign, says: "Among all the powers that
 "be ordained of God, the regal is most high, strong, and large.
 "Kings are above all, inferior to none, to no man, to no multitude
 "of men, to no angels, to no order of angels. . . . Their power
 "is not only human but superhuman. . . . It is participation
 "of God's own omnipotency, which He never did communicate to
 "any multitude of men, but only and immediately to His own vice-
 "gerent."* And so I might go on giving you a *catena patrum*
 down to Bishop Horsley, who, in the reign of George III., declared
 that "the people had nothing to do with the laws but to obey
 them."

It is impossible to exaggerate the evil of such teaching. It
 operates in two ways. First, it encourages princes in their most
 exorbitant and dangerous pretensions to absolute power. Is it
 any wonder that the Jameses and the Charleses, to whose lips
 copious draughts of such fulsome adulation as this were held by
 consecrated hands in the very vessels of the sanctuary, should
 have become drunk with despotism? And still worse was its
 second tendency, to beget in the popular mind a base and ser-
 vile spirit, inconsistent with the very existence of liberty. If the
 people of England had given heed to the political doctrines of their
 Established Church, they must have remained the most abject of
 slaves to the end of time. And as the teaching of the clergy so was
 their conduct. In the long conflict of centuries between arbitrary
 power and the rising spirit of freedom in this country, the Church
 of England has invariably sided with the former. There is a very
 significant passage in Hallam's History of the reign of Elizabeth.
 He is accounting for the fact that while the Queen and the bishops
 were furious in their persecution of the Puritans, Walsingham
 and the other statesmen of Elizabeth's court did what they could

* These and other extracts are given in Perry's "History of the Church," pp. 358,
 362, 366.

to protect them. And why? Because, in prospect of the accession of Mary Queen of Scots, and the consequent attempt that would inevitably have been made to effect the destruction of Protestantism, and the extinction of the national liberties, they felt these were the men that could be relied on for the defence of both. "In so awful a crisis," he says, "to what could they better look than to the stern, intrepid, uncompromising spirit of Puritanism? Of conforming Churchmen in general they might well be doubtful, after the oscillations of three preceding reigns; but every abhorrer of ceremonies, every rejecter of prelatical authority, might be trusted as Protestant to the heart's core. . . . Nor had the Puritans admitted even in theory, those extravagant notions of passive obedience which the Church of England had thought fit to mingle with her homilies." It was this that led Sir Francis Walsingham to thwart the harsh intolerance of the bishops.* When James I. took possession of the throne of England, the heads of the Church did all they could to place the national liberties prostrate at his feet. Never did any body of men debase themselves more utterly. After the contemptible Scotch pedant had bullied, and browbeaten, and driven out of his presence, with a threat to harry them out of the land, the Puritan divines, headed by Dr. Reynolds, whom Mr. Hallam calls the most learned man in England, Bishop Bancroft fell on his knees and said, "I protest that my heart melteth for joy that Almighty God, of His singular mercy, has given us such a King as since Christ's time has not been." Chancellor Egerton said, "He had never seen the King and Priest so fully united in one person." And on another occasion the Archbishop said: "Undoubtedly your Majesty speaks by the special assistance of God's spirit."† Thus they fooled him to the top of his bent. Indeed the extravagance to which they pushed their servility looks almost like madness. Thus Dr. Cowell, Vicar-general of the Archbishop, published a book in which he affirms that the King is not bound by laws or by his coronation oath—that he is not obliged to call Parliaments to make laws, but may do it without them—that it is a great favour to admit the consent of the subject in giving subsi-

* Hallam's "Constitutional History," Vol. I., p. 195.

† Neal's History, Vol. I., p. 21.

dies. Another clergyman, Dr. Blackwood, maintained that the English were all slaves from the Norman Conquest.* And when the King, disgusted with the remonstrances of Parliament about grievances, determined to govern without Parliaments, we are told that this was done by the advice of Bancroft; and all this to a man whom Bishop Burnet describes as "the scorn of the age, a "mere pedant, without true judgment, courage, or steadiness, his "reign being a continued course of mean practices."

Lord Macaulay says that "the meeting of the Long Parliament was one of the greatest eras in the history of the civilised "world." It must be borne in mind that the members of that body were Churchmen. And yet, when they came to consider the imminent peril in which the national liberties were placed, the first point on which they fixed, and on which they laid the strongest emphasis, was the tyranny of the Church as the most formidable prop to the tyranny of the State. That great Parliament, as is well known, embodied the case of the people of England in an elaborate document known as the "Grand Remonstrance." The "Grand Remonstrance," says Mr. John Forster, in the admirable volume in which he has brought to light and revived that memorable State paper, "is the most "authentic statement ever put forth of the wrongs endured by all "the classes of the English people during the first fifteen years of "the reign of Charles the First, and for that reason the most complete justification on record of the great rebellion." In this solemn indictment, which the Commons of England brought against the high ecclesiastical authorities, they are charged with "cherishing to the utmost such views of Church doctrine and "discipline as would establish ecclesiastical tyranny, and with including under the opprobrious name of Puritans, "all who desire "to preserve unimpaired the public laws and liberties, and the "purity and power of the true religion." In the petition to the King which accompanied the Remonstrance, its authors are still more explicit in indicating those against whom their accusations are directed, for "they beseech his Majesty that he will, *in regard to the bishops*, concur with and second his people's humble "desires in a parliamentary way, to abridge their immoderate

* Neal's History, Vol. I., p. 79.

“ power usurped over the clergy, to deprive them of their temporal jurisdiction in Parliament, to take away such oppression in religion, church government, and discipline as had been brought in and fomented by them; and to abate their pressure upon weak consciences by removing those oppressions and unnecessary ceremonies.”*

It is not necessary for me to dwell on the part taken by the clergy of the Established Church in the memorable struggle which then began. It was their pride and boast that they faithfully followed the King's fortunes. Nay, it is undeniable that it was their influence largely that propelled the King into that infatuated course of arbitrary conduct which brought into imminent jeopardy the liberties of all Englishmen. “ Archbishop Laud,” says Neal, “ had the direction of all public affairs in England for twelve years together. Was not the Archbishop at the head of the Council Table, the Star Chamber, and the Court of High Commission? Was not his Grace the contriver and promoter of all the monopolies and oppressions that brought on the civil war?” In the civil war the whole body of the clergy sided with the King. They endured great hardships and submitted to many sacrifices in vindication of their loyalty. For this let every honour be done to them. All men are worthy of respect who conscientiously suffer for a principle. But we cannot, we ought not, to forget that that was the critical epoch in the history of our country's liberties; that the principle for which they contended was the principle of arbitrary authority; and the man in whom that principle was embodied was the man who had used his utmost efforts to strangle British freedom in its cradle.

I am afraid to trust myself to speak of the conduct of the clergy in the shameful reign of Charles II. I avail myself, therefore, of the words of another, not a Nonconformist,—“ When, in the gloomy period of vice and of reaction that followed the Restoration, the current set in against all liberal opinions, and the maxims of despotism were embodied even in the oath of allegiance, the Church of England directed the stream, allied herself in the closest union with a court whose vices were the scandal of Christendom, and exhausted her anathemas not upon

* “ The Grand Remonstrance,” p. 361.

“ the hideous corruption that surrounded her, but upon the principles of Hampden and of Milton. All through the long encroachments of the Stuarts she exhibited the same spirit. The very year when Russell died was selected by the University of Oxford to condemn the writings of Buchanan, Baxter, and Milton, and to proclaim the duty of passive obedience in a decree which the House of Lords soon afterwards committed to the flames.”* In the reign of James II. the Church of England was placed in a peculiar position. After James, when he was Duke of York, had turned Catholic, the friends of Protestantism and of freedom, distrusting the use he might make of his power when he ascended the throne, introduced into Parliament a bill to exclude him from the succession. But the clergy made a great and successful effort to procure its defeat, and when it was rejected presented an address to Charles congratulating him on the result. When James actually succeeded, he began to govern with a high hand, and showed unmistakeable indications that he was preparing to turn a free government into an absolute monarchy. While he was pressing forward all these measures, while he was collecting revenue without Parliamentary sanction, while he was attacking the free charters of corporate bodies, while he was stealthily forming a large standing army in time of peace, while, through his creatures, Jeffreys and Kirke, he was practising cruelties which filled the nation with horror and loathing, while he was persecuting the Nonconformists in England, and still more atrociously persecuting the Covenanters in Scotland, the bishops made no sign of disapproval. As Mr. Fox says, “ So long as James contented himself with absolute power in civil matters, and did not make use of his authority against the Church, everything went smooth and easy.”† But the moment he showed a disposition, by his declaration of indulgence, to touch its ecclesiastical monopoly, then it threw to the winds the doctrines it had been steadfastly teaching for more than two hundred years. As Defoe says, “ Then, passive pulpits beat the ecclesiastical drum of war ; absolute subjection took up arms ; and obedience for conscience sake resisted divine right.” The act of the king was no doubt unlawful and insidious, and ought to have been resisted.

*“ Rationalism in Europe,” Vol. I., pp. 182-183. † Fox’s History of James II., p. 165.

So felt the Nonconformists of that day, for though the declaration was eminently to their advantage, and calculated to remove disabilities and oppressions under which they laboured, they refused to accept it, and joined in the resistance. But unhappily, the conduct of the clergy afterwards proved too clearly that their opposition sprang from no love of constitutional liberty, but because the act was levelled against their exclusive privileges, for no sooner was the immediate danger over than they seemed to repent of their conduct, deplored the deposition of James, began to intrigue for his return, and far from redeeming the fair promises of redressing the grievances of Nonconformists which they had made in the hour of trial, used their utmost endeavours, as soon as they had the power, still more to abridge their rights and to tighten their bonds.

Mr. Hallam says that the great ultimate security of English freedom was the expulsion of the House of Stuart. But the Established Church used its influence to prevent their expulsion and to promote their return. The conduct of the clergy towards William III., whom few people now will doubt was the great deliverer of England from temporal and spiritual oppression, and the founder of our constitutional liberties, was a signal illustration of the little care they had for "the ultimate security of English freedom." Only a few weeks before his arrival they had braved the anger of James by refusing to read his edict of toleration, not, as they said, because they disliked toleration, but because they hated tyranny. And yet when James had stolen away like a thief in the night, and William had come to save the country from a slavery which even they acknowledged was imminent, what did they do? They turned their back upon him, and utterly rejected him as their Sovereign. The oath of allegiance was refused by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Bishop of Chester, the Bishop of Chichester, the Bishop of Ely, the Bishop of Gloucester, the Bishop of Norwich, the Bishop of Peterborough, and the Bishop of Worcester. The only friends of William among the clergy were the Low Churchmen, as they were afterwards called: and Macaulay says, "we should probably overrate their numerical strength if we estimate them as a tenth part of the priesthood." The great majority of the clergy

however, ultimately took the oaths rather than lose their benefices, but with such obvious insincerity that Bishop Burnet expressly declares that the infidelity which then rapidly spread through the kingdom was owing in part to this conduct of the clergy. "It must be confessed," he says, "that the behaviour of many clergymen gave atheists no small advantage. They had taken the oaths and read the prayers for the present Government, and yet they showed in many places their aversion to it too visibly. . . . This made many conclude that the clergy were a sort of men that would swear and pray even against their consciences rather than lose their benefices, and by consequence that they were governed by interest not by principle."* I should detain you too long if I were to enter into a minute inquiry into the sentiments and conduct of the clergy in their relation to the civil power in the reign of Queen Anne and the first two Georges. I believe it is clearly demonstrable that they had no great favour to the House of Hanover until George III. threw himself completely into their hands. In the rebellions of 1715, and 1745, it was the general conviction that the sympathies of many of them were with the Pretender. C. J. Fox, in advocating the cause of the Dissenters in the House of Commons many years afterwards, refers to those critical times, and says, "Gentlemen should recollect that, at the times alluded to, the High Churchmen did not display much gallantry, for many appeared perplexed and pusillanimous. Hence the superior glory of the Dissenters, who, regardless of every danger, had boldly stood forth in defence of the rights and liberties of the kingdom." Some Churchmen, indeed, were known to intrigue boldly for the restoration of the Stuarts. Bishop Atterbury was conspicuous in this work, and that he was sustained by the secret sympathies and instigations of many of his brethren is proved by the remarkable fact, mentioned by Lord Mahon in his History, that when in 1722, Atterbury was arrested because he was known to be engaged in a treasonable conspiracy with the Pretender, "he was publicly prayed for in most of the churches of London and Westminster."†

A most curious confirmation of the fact as to the Jacobite pro-

* "History of My Own Time," Vol. II., p. 101.

† Mahon's History of England, Vol. II., p. 38.

clivities of the clergy is contained in a letter which Dr. Watts, no violent political Dissenter, publicly addressed to the Nonconformists, recommending them to withdraw their subscriptions from the charity schools conducted by the clergy to which they had been accustomed largely to contribute, because "the children were brought up, in too many of these schools, in disaffection to the present Government, in bigoted zeal for the word 'church,' and with a violent enmity, and a malicious spirit of persecution against all whom they were taught to call Presbyterians, though from many of their hands they received their bread and clothing."

In the early part of the reign of George III. there arose another struggle for liberty, which, though it had immediate reference to one of Britain's remote dependencies, involved really the same principles as were concerned in the conflict with the Stuarts. I suppose no two opinions now exist as to the folly and injustice of the attempt made by the Tory Government of the day to tax the American Colonies without their consent, or as to the wickedness of the war, prompted and sustained principally by the personal obstinacy of the King, that was waged to enforce that arbitrary claim. The Dissenters almost to a man opposed the war, and the policy that led to it, as a gross infraction of constitutional right. But the Church threw itself with the utmost violence into the opposite scale. "The clergy," said Burke, in a letter to Fox, "are astonishingly warm in this American business; and what the Tories are when embodied and united with their natural head, the crown, and animated by their clergy, no man knows better than yourself." The pulpits of the Establishment resounded with the fiercest diatribes against the colonists. The old rusty weapons of passive obedience and non-resistance were furbished up and flashed in the face of the Americans. The rebellion was compared to the sin of witchcraft, Franklin was likened to Ahithopel, and Washington to Jeroboam. Every measure for carrying on the war, and for adding renewed oppression to the colonies was supported by the Bench of Bishops. "Twenty-four Bishops," wrote Franklin, "with all the lords in possession or expectation of places, make a dead majority that renders all debating ridiculous."*

* Skeats' "History of the Free Churches," p. 437.

That time and the time that immediately followed was one of the darkest in our history—a time, pregnant with peril to English freedom. The King and the ruling classes, rendered frantic by fear in consequence of the French Revolution, passed a series of laws of the most despotic character, tending to gag the press, to stop public meetings, to suppress political discussion, and to destroy every vestige of popular liberty. When some of these bills were before Parliament, Charles Fox declared that “they positively repealed the Bill of Rights, and cut up the whole Constitution by the roots by changing our limited monarchy into an absolute despotism.” These oppressive laws were applied with the most vindictive severity, and men were fined, imprisoned, and transported for the use of language not one whit stronger than that now freely used at political meetings by men of all parties. And not content with these legal prosecutions, drunken mobs, shouting as their watch-cry the motto, “Church and King,” were hounded on by friends of the Government to attack and burn down the houses of the most innocent and virtuous citizens. And, unhappily, in this deadly crusade against liberty, the clergy were again conspicuous, as well as in promoting that war with France, which was confessedly undertaken to divert attention from the demands for reform which was beginning to rise in the country.

When the nation began to recover breath after the exhaustion of that tremendous conflict, its attention was turned afresh to the necessity of reform in its own domestic institutions. I suppose none will now question that such reform was imperatively required. Parliamentary representation was a mere sham. The voice of the people at large had no power whatever in the House which made the laws and imposed the taxes. The nation may be said to have had no political life. The necessity of parliamentary reform may be in some degree measured by the immense progress in Liberal legislation which has been made since that reform was effected. And yet, when in 1830-1 the demand arose from the heart of the nation, with a unanimity and earnestness which brooked neither denial nor delay, the entire body of the clergy set themselves strenuously to resist what was nearly the universal will of the people. This is mournfully acknowledged by the Rev. W. N. Molesworth, himself a clergyman, in his “History of the Reform

Bill," published a few years ago. "The clergy," says he, "were almost unanimous in their hatred of the proposed innovation. Already highly unpopular, partly on account of the determined opposition which, as a body, they had offered to every proposal for the extension of civil and religious liberty, and partly on account of the vexations and disputes attendant on the collection of tithes, they rendered themselves still more odious by their undisguised detestation of the new measure;"* and the reason assigned by Mr. Molesworth for their conduct is precisely one which proves that this resistance to what the nation desired arose purely from their being ministers of an Established Church, because they feared spoliation of church property. When the critical division took place which was to decide the fate of the measure, and when England was trembling on the verge of revolution, 21 bishops, headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, voted against the bill and threw it out, which provoked Lord Suffield to say "That the votes of the right rev. prelates were in favour of Government so long as it adopted severe measures against the people, and that they began to be opposed to Government only when a liberal policy was formed."

Among the grievances with which the Reformed Parliament was called to deal, there was one which from its peculiar nature it might have been expected would have enlisted the instinctive sympathies of all ministers of religion in the effort to get it redressed. I allude of course to the Corn Laws—laws as unjust as were ever, I believe, inscribed on the statute book of any nation, the tendency, if not the avowed design, of which was to increase the value of the rich man's estate by raising the price of the poor man's bread. I need not tell you in how many ways those odious laws operated to stifle the life and stunt the growth of the national prosperity; how they fettered industry, suppressed enterprise, diverted the legitimate employment of capital. But there are probably not many, even in Manchester, who can remember the terrible and widespread distress they inflicted on the people. Speaking of the year 1840, Mr. Prentice, in his "History of the League," says: "At the time when Parliament was prorogued there were 20,936 persons in Leeds

* Molesworth, p. 156.

“ whose average earnings were only $11\frac{3}{4}$ d. a week. In Paisley, “ nearly one-fourth of the population was in a state bordering “ upon actual starvation. In one district of Manchester, the “ Rev. Mr. Beardsall visited 258 families, consisting of 1,029 “ individuals, whose average earnings were only $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. per week. “ Colonel Thompson, who had just visited Bolton, said ‘ anything “ ‘ like the squalid misery, the slow, mouldering, putrifying death “ ‘ by which the weak and feeble of the working classes are perishing “ ‘ here, it never befel my eyes to behold, nor my imagination to “ ‘ conceive.’ While millions were in this deplorable condition, the “ duty on the importation of wheat was 24s. 8d.; on oats, 13s. 9d.; “ on barley, 10s. 10d.; and on rye, 14s. per qr.” But when that great Association was formed in this city, headed by Richard Cobden and John Bright, to procure the abolition of these laws, what help did they receive from the clergy in their enterprise? None, or next to none. When the country was in the condition just described, it occurred to the leaders of the League to invoke the aid of ministers of religion to protest in the name of the Gospel against laws which were as opposed to the obvious designs of Providence as to the true interests of nations. They issued an invitation to clergymen of all denominations to meet in a conference at Manchester. 630 ministers of various denominations accepted the invitation, and came from all parts of the country to tell the tale of bitter privation and distress with which they were so familiar among the poor of their flocks. But among these, how many were there of the clergy of the Established Church? There was one—one solitary man, the Rev. Thomas Spencer, of Bath—

Among the faithless, faithful only he.

And when the bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws came to the House of Lords in 1846, nine of the bishops recorded their votes against it.

And, what is still more surprising, when movements not of a political character at all, but simply in promotion of knowledge, justice, and humanity, have been set on foot, too frequently the clergy have been either indifferent or hostile. In regard, for instance, to the long struggle for the abolition of slavery in our colonies, very few of them took any active part in the agitation. One of the veteran survivors of the noble band of philanthropists

who carried on that crusade of humanity has told me—"I believe "I could almost count on my ten fingers the clergymen who helped "us in that conflict. There were a few, like good Mr. Marsh, of "Birmingham, and others, who threw themselves earnestly into "the work; but, in general, they were against us, or utterly "indifferent." And in those great anti-slavery conferences held in London during the progress of the struggle, attended by many hundreds of gentlemen from all parts of the country, including a large proportion of ministers of religion of all denominations, there were seldom more than four or five clergymen present. And Lord Russell has emphatically declared that it was "the Dissenters who carried the abolition of slavery."

There was another portentous evil which began to attract the attention of some of our moral and political reformers about the beginning of the present century—I mean the character of our criminal code. I suppose there never was in any country in the world a body of laws more ferocious and sanguinary than that which dishonoured the statute book of England at that time. There were upwards of 300 offences punishable with death. The law made it capital to steal goods to the value of 5s. out of any shop, warehouse, coach-house, or stable; to cut down trees, to break down mounds of fish-ponds, to steal deer out of a park, or rabbits out of a warren, or linen out of a bleaching ground; and what, perhaps, is not so generally known, these enactments had not come down from ancient and more barbarous times, but a vast proportion of them had actually been passed within the memory of man. "There are persons now living," said Sir F. T. Buxton, in 1819, "at whose birth the criminal code contained less than "sixty capital offences, and who have seen that number quadrupled—who have seen an Act pass making offences capital "by the dozen and by the score." Human life was sacrificed with a levity that is incredible. Strings of men, women, and almost children were continually seen dangling in front of our gaols, and some of them for offences which are now deemed sufficiently expiated by a few weeks' imprisonment. At length the horrors of this system of judicial murder moved men like Bentham, and Romilly, and Mackintosh to make some efforts to mitigate its severity. Would it not have been natural to expect

that those whose business it was to expound the merciful genius of the Gospel would have felt that this savage code was a reproach to any State calling itself Christian, and would have eagerly rallied around those who were trying to effect some mitigation of its Draconic rigour? But what was the case? The first attempt of Romilly was to abolish capital punishment for the crime of stealing privately to the amount of five shillings in a shop. No one could charge this with being a rash or extravagant innovation. Yet session after session this small measure of mercy, after being carried through the Commons, was rejected by the Lords, the Bishops being always conspicuous by their numbers in the adverse vote. Romilly records this again and again in his diary. Thus under the date of May 30th, 1810, he says, "The second reading of the bill to abolish capital punishment for the crime of stealing privately to the amount of five shillings in a shop, came on to-day in the House of Lords. It was rejected by a majority of 31 to 11, the Ministers having procured a pretty full attendance of Peers, considering the advanced season of the year, to throw it out. Amongst these were no less than seven prelates, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of London, of Salisbury, of Ely, of Hereford, of Chester, and Porter, an Irish Bishop. I rank these prelates amongst the members who were solicited to vote against the bill, because I would rather be convinced of their servility towards Government than that, recollecting the mild doctrines of their religion, they could have come down to the House spontaneously to vote that transportation for life is not a sufficiently severe punishment for pilfering what is of five shillings value, and that nothing but the blood of the offender can afford an adequate atonement for such a transgression."* The apology seems to be almost worse than the act, and furnishes at least another flagrant illustration of the evil effects of making the ministers of religion the creatures of Government.

Nor must we forget that, meritorious and most exemplary as have been the exertions of the clergy in late years in promoting popular education, there was a time when they were its sturdy opponents, or, at most, when they tardily admitted its propriety strictly on condition of its being absolutely under their own con-

*Life of Romilly, 12mo., Vol. II., p. 150.

trol, and made subservient to the interests of the Established Church. When in 1807, Mr. Whitbread introduced into Parliament the Parochial Schools Bill, the Archbishop of Canterbury was one of its principal opponents. His main reason for opposing it was that the advantages of education were extended more than appeared to be thought, and that the provisions of the bill left little or no control to the minister of the parish. "This" says he, "would subvert the first principles of education in this country, which had hitherto been, and he trusted, would continue to be, under the conduct and auspices of the Establishment; and their Lordships would feel how dangerous it would be to innovate in these matters. Their Lordships' prudence would and must guard against innovations that might shake the foundations of religion."* And when Joseph Lancaster started his system of teaching the poor, though it was as perfectly liberal and unsectarian a system as it was possible to be, the bishops and clergy raised a tremendous hubbub. The benevolent Quaker and his plans were denounced in the most unmeasured terms. One Church writer said it was "a wild, absurd, and anti-Christian scheme, and calculated to answer no one purpose so much as amalgamating the great body of the people into one great deistical concordat." The plan, said another, was a plan of a Quaker, and "Quakerism meant nothing but deism and a disgusting amalgam of all those anti-Christian heresies and blasphemies which were permitted to disgrace and disturb the Church in her early days." Still, in spite of these declamations, the system was extending; and rather, therefore, than let the education of the people fall into the hands of the Dissenters, why the Church must start an educational system of its own. And such is really the whole account of the origin of the National School Society and its operations.†

*Hansard, 1807.

† I give Dr. Bell's own words in reply to a letter from Mrs. Trimmer, a great light of the Church in those days, in which she predicted that if Lancaster's plan were allowed to go on much longer, "the common people would not know that there was such a thing as the Established Church in the nation." "What you say," he wrote, "*of preventing this scheme against the Church*, is what some years ago occurred to me; and I then said, what I shall never cease to repeat, that I know of but one way effectually to check these efforts, and it is by able and well-directed efforts of our own hands."—*Southey's Life of Bell*, II., 150.

Earl Russell, in a letter written from Cannes, Feb. 1, 1872, says:—"The clergy

It is hardly credible, but it is nevertheless true, that when the British and Foreign Bible Society was formed, although its sole and simple object was to furnish the Sacred Scriptures in their purest form to the people of this country who were perishing for lack of knowledge, it was assailed with the utmost virulence by the dignitaries and clergy of the Established Church; and the reason openly avowed was that it was dangerous to the Church. "Supply these people with Bibles," said an established clergyman, "I speak as a true Churchman; and you will supply them with weapons against yourselves." Dr. Law, then Bishop of Chester, in his charge to the clergy, said, "The tendency of the Bible Society is unfavourable to our Church Establishment."

Now, I ask you to consider, in the light of the facts I have brought before you, what would have been the present condition of this country if the influence of the Established Church had been predominant on our national destinies. So far as I can see, we should have been still under the dominion of the Stuarts—still subject to the Star Chamber and the High Court of Commission; still victims to the slavish doctrines of non-resistance and passive obedience; still without a vestige of religious liberty, the Nonconformists crushed by the Uniformity Act, the Conventicle Act, the Five-mile Act, and other atrocious acts passed against them by the influence of the Church; still with our sanguinary criminal code unamended; still without Parliamentary Reform; still with Protection and the Corn Laws lying like an incubus on our industry. In short, we should have been a people without rights, without freedom, without hope, trampled under foot alike by tyranny and priestcraft. And I ask you, further, is it natural that men like clergymen of the Church of England, men of education, possessed of the highest learning and culture of their times—the declared servants of the Just and Merciful, and men who in other directions have, I have no doubt, proved themselves kind, charitable, humane—is it natural, I ask, unless some pernicious disturbing element were at work, that they should be always found, as we have found them, on the side of

"were in those days—even the Liberal clergy—generally opposed to the education of the poor; but, finding the course of education made progress, they agreed in 1811 to set up a society for founding and maintaining schools."

despotic rulers and bad laws? Surely, the ministers of Christ's Gospel should be in the van of human civilisation—the first to champion the rights of the humble and oppressed. And I believe the disturbing element has been, in this case, the connection of their Church with the State. I believe, moreover, in my innermost heart, that the day when the severance of that connection shall take place will be for the Church of England herself a day of jubilee, a day of deliverance from memories of the past and associations of the present which paralyse her spirit, tarnish her reputation, and incalculably impede her usefulness as a Christian Church.





